

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior listings:

1. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier for mounting onto a rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door, which defines an upper edge and a lower edge, comprising:

- a frame having a rigid lower engagement means configured for engagement with the lower edge of the vehicle component, wherein the frame and the rigid lower engagement means are configured such that engagement of the rigid lower engagement means with the lower edge of the vehicle component prevents upward movement of the frame relative to the vehicle component;

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- a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;

- at least one support interconnected with the frame above the lower engagement means via an adjustable position engagement arrangement that enables adjustment in the vertical position of the support relative to the frame;

- at least one vehicle engaging member carried by and movable with the support, wherein the vehicle engaging member is configured to engage the vehicle component at a position between the lower edge and the upper edge of the vehicle component;

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- a strap member having upper engagement means for engagement with the upper edge of the vehicle component;

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- strap engaging and tensioning means carried by and movable with the support, wherein said strap member is engaged with the strap engaging and tensioning means and can be controlled for tensioning the strap member in order to tighten said upper and lower engagement means onto said upper and lower edges, respectively, of the vehicle component; and

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wherein the adjustable position engagement arrangement is configured and arranged to enable simultaneous adjustment in the vertical position of the vehicle

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engaging member and the strap engaging and tensioning means relative to the frame
in order to vary the location of the strap member and the vehicle engaging member
relative to the frame.

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2. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 1, wherein said strap
engaging and tensioning means comprise a mechanism for holding the strap member
in any set position relative to said support, a strap tensioning member for applying
tension to said strap member, and a release control member for releasing said
5 mechanism in order to enable free movement of the strap member relative to said
support.

3. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 2, wherein said mechanism is
a ratchet mechanism.

4. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 1, wherein said
vehicle engaging member for engaging the vehicle component is mounted to said
support via a pivot connection.

5. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier arrangement, comprising:
a movable rear vehicle component defining an upper edge and a lower
edge, wherein the movable vehicle component is movable between an open position
and a closed position; and

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component of a vehicle structure, such as
a vehicle trunk lid or door

5 an equipment carrier, comprising:

- a frame having a rigid lower engagement means for engaging
the lower edge of the vehicle component, wherein the frame and the rigid lower
engagement means are configured such that engagement of the rigid lower
engagement means with the lower edge of the vehicle component prevents upward
10 movement of the frame relative to the vehicle component;

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- a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for
carrying one or more items of equipment;

- at least one support interconnected with the frame above the
lower engagement means;

15 _____ - at least one vehicle engaging member, secured to the support,
wherein the vehicle engaging member is configured to engage the vehicle component at a
position between the lower edge and the upper edge of the vehicle component;
_____ - a strap member having upper engagement means for
engagement with the upper edge of the vehicle component;
20 _____ - strap engaging and tensioning means secured to the support,
wherein said strap member is secured to said strap engaging and tensioning means and
wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means can be controlled for tensioning the
strap member in order to tighten said upper and lower engagement means onto said
upper and lower edges, respectively, of the vehicle component,;
25 _____ - wherein the vehicle engaging member is secured to the support
such that the support is located between the frame and the vehicle engaging member;
and
_____ - wherein the equipment carrier is maintained in engagement with
the movable vehicle component and is movable with the vehicle component between
30 the open and closed positions when the strap member is tensioned via the strap
engaging and tensioning means and the lower engagement means is engaged with the
lower edge of the vehicle component, the upper engagement means of the strap
member is engaged with the upper edge of the vehicle component, and the vehicle
engaging member is engaged with the vehicle component between the upper and
35 lower edges.

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6. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 5, wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means is in the form of strap winding means.

7. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 6, wherein the strap winding means comprises a mechanism for holding the strap winding means in any set condition, a strap tensioning member for controlling the mechanism in order to apply a tension to the strap member, and a release control member to release the
5 mechanism in order to enable unwinding of the strap member from said strap winding means.

8. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 7, wherein said mechanism is a ratchet mechanism.

9. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 5, wherein said support defines an interior within which the strap is stored in a wound configuration by the strap engaging means.

10. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier~~arrangement~~, comprising:
a movable rear vehicle component defining an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein the movable vehicle component is movable between an open position and a closed position; and

Deleted: for mounting onto a movable rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door

5 an equipment carrier, comprising:

_____ - a frame having an upper portion and a lower portion, wherein the lower portion of the frame includes a lower hook arrangement that is configured to engage the lower edge of the movable vehicle component, wherein the frame and the lower hook arrangement are configured such that engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the movable vehicle component is operable to rigidly connect the lower portion of the frame to the movable vehicle component and prevent upward movement of the frame relative to the vehicle component;

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10 _____ - a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;

15 _____ - at least one vehicle engaging member, connected to the frame, wherein the vehicle engaging member is located above the lower hook arrangement and is configured to engage the movable vehicle component at a position above said lower edge of the movable vehicle component, wherein the vehicle engaging member is interconnected with the frame via a pivot connection that defines a transverse pivot axis; and

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20 _____ - a strap member interconnected with the frame via a strap member support, wherein the strap member includes upper engagement means for engagement with an upper edge defined by the movable vehicle component;

- strap engaging and tensioning means carried by the frame,
wherein said strap member is secured to said strap engaging and tensioning means and
wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means can be controlled for tensioning the
strap member in order to tighten said upper engagement means onto said upper edge
of the vehicle component;

_____ - wherein, when the carrier is mounted on the vehicle by engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the movable vehicle component and engagement of the strap member upper engagement means with the upper edge of the movable vehicle component, with the vehicle engaging member engaged with the movable vehicle component at a location therebetween, tensioning the strap member via the strap engaging and tensioning means induces a tilting action on said frame around said transverse pivot axis which causes the lower hook arrangement of said frame to be urged against the lower edge of the movable vehicle component so as to clamp the movable vehicle components between the upper engagement means of the strap member and the lower hook arrangement of the frame, wherein the equipment carrier is maintained in engagement with the movable vehicle component and is movable with the vehicle component between the open and closed positions.

Deleted: the vehicle engaging member is interconnected with the frame via a pivot connection that defines a transverse pivot axis, wherein

11. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 10, wherein said vehicle engaging member is in form of a rocking member having a mid portion pivotally supported around said pivot axis by said frame and two end portions to which vehicle engaging feet are pivotally connected.

12. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 11, wherein said rocking member is U-shaped.

13. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim10, wherein the lower hook arrangement is interconnected with a forwardly facing end defined by the lower portion of said frame so as to be able to perform a limited rotation with respect to said forwardly facing end.

14. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 12, wherein said frame includes at least one upright section, and wherein said strap member support is mounted on said upright section by connecting means enabling an adjustment of the position of said support along said upright section.

15. (Withdrawn - Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 14, wherein each upright section has spaced indentations selectively engageable by said connecting means.

16. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 14, wherein said connecting means comprises clamp means carried by said support and adapted to be tightened around said upright section at any position thereof by means of a tightening screw.

17. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 16, wherein each upright section has a forwardly facing flat surface engageable by said tightening screw of said clamp means in order to prevent rotation of the support relative to the upright section.

18. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 16, wherein said support has a supporting structure in form of a U-bent metal sheet surrounding a rearwardly facing portion of the upright section and having two cut-away portions defining said clamp means, which are engageable by said tightening screw forwardly of said upright
5 section.

19. (Currently Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 10, wherein said
| frame comprises a pair of upright sections and a cross member extending
therebetween, and wherein the structure for carrying the one or more items of
equipment is interconnected with said cross-member via an array of angularly spaced
5 axial ridges arranged around the cross-member and extending longitudinally
therealong, and wherein the structure for carrying the one or more items of equipment
includes at least one equipment carrying arm having a hub section with an inner
surface having an array of longitudinal angularly spaced teeth which are engageable
with said ridges, to connect said arm to said cross-member at different desired
10 orientations.

20. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 19, wherein said ridges are formed on an engagement member surrounding said cross-member.

21. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 20, wherein said engagement member surrounding the cross-member has a split construction.

22. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 19, wherein said hub section has a split construction.

23. (Withdrawn – Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 3, wherein said support has a through passage through which said strap member is engaged, said strap member having a series of one-way teeth, and wherein said ratchet mechanism includes a toothed strap retainer pivotally mounted to said support and
5 elastically biased to a position in which its teeth engage the teeth of the strap member, so as to enable movement of the strap member in a tensioning direction and prevent movement of the strap member in a direction opposite the tensioning direction.

24. (Withdrawn – Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 23, wherein said strap tensioning member is in form of a tensioning lever pivotally mounted on said support and having a series of one-way teeth engageable with said teeth of the strap member, said lever being operable to have an active tensioning
5 movement from a first position to a second position, where it causes tensioning of the strap member, and an inactive return movement from the second position to the first position, during which the strap retainer holds the strap member in the previously reached position.

25. (Withdrawn) A carrier as set forth in claim 24, wherein said release control member is in form of a trigger member which can be actuated in order to move said strap retainer away from its position engaging the strap member.

26. (Withdrawn) A carrier as set forth in claim 23, wherein said support has a split construction.

27. (Withdrawn – Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 8, wherein said strap winding means include a strap winding roller rotatably mounted to said support, on which the strap member can be wound, and wherein said ratchet

mechanism includes at least one ratchet wheel carried by said winding roller and
5 having a series of one-way teeth, and a retainer having a series of teeth which is
pivotally mounted to said support and elastically biased to a position in which the
teeth of the retainer engage the teeth of the ratchet wheel, so as to enable a rotation of
the wheel in a strap winding tensioning direction and preventing an opposite rotation
of the wheel.

28. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 27, wherein
said strap tensioning member is in form of a lever pivotally mounted on said support
and provided with a toothed pawl pivotally connected to said tensioning lever and
5 lever being operable to have an active movement from a first position to a second
position, in which said pawl causes rotation of the ratchet wheel in the strap winding
tensioning direction, and an inactive return movement from the second position to the
first position, during which the retainer holds the ratchet wheel in the previously
reached position.

29. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 28, wherein said release
control member is in form of a trigger member which can be actuated in order to move
said retainer away from its position engaging the ratchet wheel.

30. (Withdrawn) A carrier as set forth in claim 24, wherein said support
is mounted on an upright section forming part of the carrier frame, and wherein said
tensioning lever is pivotally mounted to said support around an axis located forwardly
of said upright section, and has a body extending rearwardly of the upright section,
5 with a through passage through which the upright section is arranged.

31. (Withdrawn) A carrier as set forth in claim 30, wherein said release
control member is in form of a trigger member arranged on said support forwardly of
the upright section and operable by pulling it rearwardly.

32. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier arrangement,
comprising:

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rear component of a vehicle structure,
such as a vehicle trunk lid or door that is
movable relative to the vehicle between
an open position and a closed position

_____ a movable rear vehicle component defining an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein the movable vehicle component is movable between an open position and a closed position; and

_____ an equipment carrier, comprising:

_____ - a frame having a lower portion that includes a lower hook arrangement that is engageable with the lower edge of the movable vehicle component, wherein the frame and the lower hook arrangement are configured such that engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the movable vehicle component is operable to rigidly connect the lower portion of the frame to the movable vehicle component and prevent upward movement of the frame relative to the vehicle component;

_____ - a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;

_____ - at least one pivotable vehicle engaging member carried by the frame and located above the lower hook arrangement, for engaging the vehicle component at a position above said lower edge of the movable vehicle component,

_____ - a strap member having an upper hook arrangement for engagement with the upper edge defined by the movable vehicle component,

_____ - at least one support connected to the frame or forming part thereof, provided with strap engaging and tensioning means which are permanently engaged by said strap member, wherein said strap member constitutes an integral part of said carrier arrangement, whereby said carrier arrangement can be mounted on a vehicle with no need of additional separate strap members, and wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means can be controlled for tensioning the strap member in order to tighten said upper engagement means onto said upper edge of the vehicle component; and

_____ - wherein, when the carrier arrangement is secured to the movable vehicle component by tensioning the strap member via the strap engaging and tensioning means and engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower

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edge of the movable vehicle component, engagement of the upper hook arrangement with the upper edge of the movable vehicle component, and engagement of the pivotable vehicle engaging member with the movable vehicle component at a location between the upper and lower edges of the movable vehicle component, the carrier arrangement is maintained in engagement with the movable vehicle component and movable along with the movable vehicle component when the movable vehicle component is moved between the open position and a closed position.

33. (Original) A carrier as set forth in claim 19, wherein said equipment carrying structure is selected among a number of different structures adapted to carry different items of equipment, such as bicycles, skis, snowboards, pieces of luggage.

34. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 1, wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects upper ends defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the upright sections and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.

35. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 5, wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects upper ends defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the upright sections, and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.

36. (Previously Amended) A carrier as set forth in claim 10, wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects upper ends defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the upright sections, and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook

carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.

REMARKS

In the Office Action,

Applicant's attorney has made every effort to place the application into condition for allowance with claims ____, and such action is earnestly requested.

The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned by phone if questions remain after consideration of this response, or if such would otherwise facilitate prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: _____

By _____
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